Scarcity of Irrigation Water

681. SHRI K. M. SAIFULLAH:
SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA:

Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether India will be among the countries worst hit by water scarcity which will be primary global concern in the new millennium; and

(b) if so, the steps proposed to ensure that the country would not face seep cutbacks in the supply of irrigation water?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRIMATI BIJOYA CHAKRAVARTY): (a) India received average annual precipitation of about 4000 Billion Cubic Meter (BCM). Out of this about 1869 BCM appears as runoff in the various rivers of the country. On an average water availability in the country remains more or less fixed according to the natural hydrological cycle. According to international criteria any situation of yearly water availability of less than 1000 cu.m. per capita is considered as scarcity condition. It is estimated that due to increasing population, the average annual per capita water availability may come down from about 1869 cu.m. at present to 1350 cu.m. by 2025 A.D. at the national level. Due to spatial variability of rain in the country and also because of variation in population density, per capita average annual availability of water in different basins also varies from 14,057 cu.m. in Brahmaputra to 307 cu.m. in Sabarmati basin. Further, the temporal variability in the rainfall creates scarcity of water in certain years. The requirement of irrigation water in different parts of the country upto 2025 A.D. can be met through optimal sustainable development and efficient utilization of the renewable water resources through a combination of measures like construction of appropriate storages, ground water development,

watershed management, artificial recharge of ground water etc., as appropriate for particular regions.

(b) Construction of dams and storages on the rivers improves the utilization of river flows. A live storage capacity of 177 BCM has been created by construction of large dams upto 1995. Projects to add an additional storage capacity of about 75 BCM are under construction and 132 BCM are under planning. The replenishable ground water is of the order of 432 BCM, out of which about 154 BCM has been developed foi use. With the help of these storages and other minor irrigation schemes an irrigation potential of 90 Mha has been created upto the end of the Eighth Plan against the ultimate irrigation potential of 139.9 Mha in the country. For the early completion of on- going projects Government of India is extending assistance to the States under Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme.

Government of India is also promoting rainwater harvesting through Watershed Management Programme, artificial recharge of ground water and roof-top rainwater harvesting under the sector reform project of Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme under the Ministry of Rural Development, for which technical and financial assistance is provided to the State Governments and other implementing agencies. Central Ground Water Board has also taken up pilot studies for artificial ground water recharge. A National Water Policy already exists which provides for planning and management of country's water resources on a sustainable basis.

As a long term measure, National Water Development Agency have formulated National Perspective Plan for water resources development which envisages interlinking between various peninsular rivers and Himalayan rivers for transfer of water from surplus basins to water deficit basins.